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## 2025 Winter Conference

UPCOMING TRAINING



February 23-28, 2025 2025 Summer

Wheatland, CA

Virtual Conference-TBD

zoom

2025 Fall Conference

# October 19-24, 2025

Chicken Ranch Hotel and Casino

Jamestown, CA





this time to thank you all for the great work that you do a wish you a happy holiday season. This

past year has seen you outperform previous records, connect more veterans to services, and continue your innovative approaches to serving your communities. I hope that all of



This past week, nine representatives from Glenn County visited Nevada County, toured our Veterans Services Office and had a productive and informative discussion with our HHSA/DSS leadership and me. Glenn County will soon be recruiting their very first full-time VSO and will be restructuring their office from under the Probation Department to DSS. We were able to share lessons learned from our own past experiences and provided insight on importance of fully integrating their VSO into the DSS leadership team. I also would like to acknowledge Cindy Holley who has been assisting the veterans of Glenn County for 23 years, without ever have the support of fulltime VSO. You have done well ma'am.

Our Executive Director Marion Moses is planning a great winter CACVSO conference for everyone. We have already secured a fantastic keynote speaker for our banquet, and we are planning for an informative Capital visit during our lobbying day. We have reserved a room in the Capital building where we are planning on having legislators, committee members, and others come speak to you and learn from you on the great work that you perform. Additionally, the CACVSO annual report committee has been working on the development of our report and ensuring that it aligns with our 2025, legislative efforts. Through the efforts of our legislative committee, we will be focusing on four major legislative goals this coming year:

- - possible at our conference.

day, provide preparation tips, answer questions on contacting your county leadership, scheduling meetings, preparing materials, what to expect during your meetings, and lastly, how-to follow up with your legislators following your meetings. Our Women Veterans Committee and our Homeless Committee are looking for mem-

bers. Both of these committees are going to be instrumental in our efforts in 2025 and I would like to support the chairs of these committees, Codi Pennington (Women Veterans) and Gregory Coffos (Homeless Veterans) as much support as possible. Please reach out to me directly if you have any interest in doing the great work these committees are focused on. As 2024 draws to a close I want to thank you and remind you of all the great work that you have done. I am looking forward to working together in 2025 to successfully

**Nominations Update** NOMINATIONS

Happy Holidays to all! Just a

nominations for the Yvette Ma-

son Veteran Service Award for Excellence is January 2, 2025.

Please ensure your nomina-

Members: Dell Pratt (Napa County) and Bill Cook (Plumas County). The committee still has an opening for another voting member – as well as unlimited nonvoting members.

### addendum to the CACVSO Bylaws to incorporate language for a Code of Conduct (for lack of a better phrase) and our Association's expectations for conduct/

behavior during conferences, meetings,

acting on, interacting with, or as an official representative of CACVSO. We're 'leaning' towards a blanket statement referring everyone to their County's

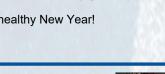
The Bylaws Committee is currently finalizing an update/

Policy on behavior/conduct. **Homeless Update** 



## have time to review and order the awards.

As we prepare for the upcoming Winter Legislative Confer-Wishing you a joyful and healthy New Year!



The California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO) Homeless Veterans Committee is thrilled to announce Greg Coffos as its newly appointed chair. Greg brings a wealth of experience and a passion for serving veter-

tions are submitted to me at rmurphy@countyofsb.org, so we

A Leader Committed to Veterans' Well-being

The State of Veteran Homelessness in California

expanded access to critical services for veterans and the community at large. Greg holds an MBA and an MA in Organizational Leadership and has a proven track record of compliance, fundraising, and exceeding program benchmarks. His previous roles include leading the Inland Empire Housing and Support Services for Step-Up on Second, where he managed 13 programs with a combined budget of over \$20 million throughout the Inland Empire and serving as East County Housing Manager for Path of Life Ministries. A U.S. Navy veteran, Greg's dedication to serving his fellow veterans is deeply rooted in his personal and professional journey.

accounts for nearly one-third of all homeless veterans in the United States, with over 10,589 homeless, and 7,436 unsheltered veterans recorded in the 2023 PIT count, with the reality of that number likely being higher. While many counties have made strides in reducing veteran homelessness in 2024, challenges persist. California voters approved Prop 1, which issued \$6.38 billion in general obligation bonds alongside statutory changes to the Mental Health Services Act. Approximately \$2 billion of the Prop 1 bond funds will be administered by the California Department of

## The demographic composition of California's homeless veteran population underscores the need for targeted interventions:

**Demographics of Homeless Veterans** 

security, such as lower incomes and limited access to family-focused housing programs.

Substance Abuse: According to data from the California Veteran's Affairs, approximately 70% of homeless veterans in California are affected by substance abuse issues, meaning approximately 7,700 homeless veterans are impacted. **How CVSOs Can Lead the Way** Ending veteran homelessness requires a coordinated effort at the local, state, and federal levels. County Veteran Service Officers

(CVSOs) are dedicated to supporting and advocating for veterans and their families. One way we support veterans experiencing homelessness is by participating in by-name list case conferencing with the VA and our homeless continuum of care leads in our

VPAN and One team approach. Leveraging Relationships: Strengthening collaboration with CalVet, the Veterans Administration, local NGOs, and other

Foster Partnerships: Collaborate with community-based organizations, housing authorities, and federal agencies to create

comprehensive support networks for homeless veterans. Advocate for Grants: Pursue grant opportunities to fund housing initiatives, employment programs, and wrap-around ser-Expand Services: Develop new satellite offices, new programs through grant funded efforts, and reentry services tailored to

ans. This can be done at every level of governance whether city, county, state, or federal.

As the new chair of the CACVSO Homeless Veterans Committee, Greg invites fellow CVSOs, stakeholders, and community leaders to join the committee in advancing solutions to resolve veteran homelessness. Together, we can leverage our collective ex-

"Veteran homelessness is a solvable issue when we unite under a common purpose," Greg stated. "I encourage all CVSOs to

provide veterans with the stability, dignity, and opportunities they deserve. **Legislative Committee Update** 

# tee or just to talk through veteran homelessness, contact Greg here at <a href="mailto:gcoffos@rivco.org">gcoffos@rivco.org</a> or 951-816-5179. Let's work together to

pertise and resources to create sustainable change.

**Reduction in Bill Limits:** The legislature has reduced the number of bills each member can introduce from 50 over the two-year cycle to 35. This change aims to focus efforts on crafting more impactful and relevant legislation, potentially benefiting issues like veteran ser vices by reducing legislative clutter. **Key Bills Affecting Veterans:** Three bills introduced for the 2025–2026 legislative cycle are particularly pertinent to veterans:

SB 1: This bill also proposes the "Military Services Retirement and Surviving Spouse Benefit Payment Act"

SB 23: This legislation seeks to provide a property tax exemption for disabled veteran homeowners, potentially reducing the

AB 53: This bill proposes the "Military Services Retirement and Surviving Spouse Benefit Payment Act," focusing on tax exclusions for military retirement and survivor benefits. Notably, AB 53 is sponsored by numerous veteran organizations, including the CVSOs, highlighting its significance within our community. We will closely monitor these bills and advocate to

Securing an increase in Subvention funding (referred to as local assistance in Sacramento) remains a top priority. This funding directly supports County Veteran Service Offices (CVSOs), enabling better services for veterans. The state must do more to safeguard veterans from predatory practices. While veterans bring significant federal funding to

## What's Next? The Legislature will fully reconvene on January 6, 2025, marking the start of the new legislative cycle. We will use this time to introduce veteran-focused bills and analyze the Governor's proposed budget, set to be released on January 10. After the bill in-

legislation.

Subvention Funding Increase:

**Protecting Veterans from Claims Sharks:** 

February 21: Last day to introduce bills.

January 1: Statutes from 2024 take effect. January 6: Legislature reconvenes. January 10: Governor's budget submitted.

### up. We know this to be true because they tell us! For example: A Veteran from San Mateo County who served on/near the Korea DMZ in the late 1960s as a Field Artillery Unit Commander in charge of maneuvering the Honest John Rocket along the Korea DMZ and now suffers from chronic lymphatic leukemia (CLL). The VA repeatedly denied his claim until he testified in October 2024 to a BVA Judge, who then took just three weeks to grant his appeal for service connection for CLL! The Veteran is relieved too because now his wife will

doubt it can be challenging and even disheartening at times, but it is so worth it when we all are able to help Veterans secure their VA benefits and compensation. Here's to all the Veterans and their families whom you all helped in 2024, and to the many more who will be helped in 2025. Although you may not hear it as much as you should, we know CA Veterans are grateful and thankful for all you do for them all year long!

In this season of preparation many are filled with excitement, friends, family and gatherings. Some are exhausted thinking of all the things they need to yet accomplish and then there are those of us who may be experiencing loneliness or maybe sadness due to the death of a loved one or close friend. Do you know the meaning of each of the candles used during each of the traditions below?

one night, yet that small amount of oil ended up lasting eight days. There are 9 candles total: The center candle, also referred to as Shamash, the helper candle, is used to light

**Cybersecurity Leadership** 2- Week Course Ollaborat we readiness program led by Fortune 500 CISOs and peers who deliver leir proven frameworks and insights on how to lead and secure a network and an ganization – protecting data assets and the enterprise brand. This program oaches participants on what if means to think and act as a cyber security leader.

**Leading With Al** 6- Week Course Bridge the gap between AI and effective government service. This program equips participants with practical AI tools and frameworks, along with real-world use cases. Learn to leverage these technologies to address the evolving needs of government work and our society, ensuring AI serves the greater good. **Leading On Purpose** 

Kwanza has 7 candles. These can-

determination, collective work and

ics, purpose, creativity, and faith.

responsibility, cooperative econom-

Programs

dles represent, unity, self-

stop taxing military retirees & surviving spouses benefits increase the Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption to an amount that aligns

with current California home values pass legislation to prevent "claim sharks" for operating in our state increasing our local assistance funding from CalVet from \$11 million to \$25 mil-If you have not done so already, please register for our <u>Winter Training Conference</u>. The sooner all members are registered, the sooner our Executive Director can begin finalizing her plans. This will only assist us with providing you the best experience Eric Ensley, CACVSO Training Chair, is busy developing a diverse agenda that dedicates time for workshops, workgroups, and informative sessions to better prepare us for our lobbying efforts. Additionally, you will soon be receiving information to attend virtual legislative/mentorship meetings that explain the importance of our legislative

achieve our ambitious goals. Thank you!

ence at the Hard Rock in Wheatland, please note that all executive board positions will be up for re-election. If you have nominations, send them to me at rmurphy@countyofsb.org.

Greg Coffos is a dynamic executive with over a decade of experience leading housing and support services programs for Non-Profit agencies. Currently serving as the Director of Veterans Services for Riverside County, Greg has spearheaded transformative measures to change and evolve the dynamic of Veterans Services in Riverside County. Under his leadership, Riverside County Veterans Services achieved remarkable milestones, including a fourfold increase in budget, an 83% boost in service provision, as well as expanded comprehensive supports including the addition of a Justice Involved program funded through BSCC, and a new housing coordinator who will spearhead the County's "No Soldiers Left Behind" initiative, a collaborative effort to rally local government, NGO, and private organizations to the goal of achieving functional zero within the veteran community. Greg's expertise in grant management, strategic partnerships, and staff development has consistently enhanced program efficacy and

ans in need, making him the ideal leader to spearhead efforts to combat veteran homelessness across California.

Housing and Community Development (HCD), in collaboration with the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) as the Homekey+ program (HK+). County Veteran Service Offices, working closely with county behavioral health departments and Veterans Administration Medical Centers, can lead to better outcomes with benefit utilization, which often leads to housing security and retention. This is an exciting development for veterans in California, but far and away from an all-encompassing solution as

ployment and housing.

counties. This allows us to screen every single veteran experiencing homelessness that is identified for valuable VA and CalVet benefits. We actively work to de-silo and streamline county services for veterans, including those experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness, by:

county departments to enhance outcomes and service accessibility. Additionally, CVSOs are uniquely positioned to:

justice-involved veterans. Provide Training: Equip staff with the knowledge and tools needed to assist veterans facing housing insecurity effectively (i.e. trauma informed care, harm reduction, motivational interviewing).

engage with this committee, share your insights, and be part of the movement to ensure every veteran in California has a place to call home." **Get Involved** The CACVSO Homeless Veterans Committee is seeking passionate individuals ready to make a difference. To join the commit-

# **Legislative Updates**

financial burden

ensure they effectively address the needs of veterans. **Governor's Special Session:** The Governor recently held a special session, emphasizing preparations for potential federal challenges. Democratic law makers are proposing additional funding for the attorney general's office and other legal defenses, including a proposed \$25 million litigation fund to defend against policies that might impact California. CACVSO-Specific Priorities

**Key Dates to Remember** 

troduction deadline on February 21, committee hearings will commence, offering opportunities to advocate for critical veteran

A surviving spouse from Merced County whose husband died from Glioblastoma Multiforme (GBM) in 2013 while his appeal for service connection was pending. With the help of her CVSO, she requested substitution and carried on his appeal, as well as her own appeal for her death benefits. With a proper medical-nexus opinion, the AOJ finally granted both her DIC benefits and her accrued benefits back to 2013! Now she will be able to afford to stay in the home she and her late-husband had purchased together, as another way to honor his legacy.

And always remember: Please reach out to us if you have any questions or any other claim/appeal-related dilemmas with which we may be able to help you figure out a path forward. We are here to help all CACVSO members! Wishing all of you and your families the happiest of holidays! Look forward to seeing you all in 2025!

Be the light for yourself and then to others

Chaplain Message

The advent wreath has 5 candles

which represent Hope, Love, Joy,

sents to birth of Jesus Christ.

Peace, and the center candle repre-

the 8 remaining candles So this holiday season I hope you find your miracle, renew your internal flame and illuminate your circle with brightness and warmth. I hope you enjoy the seasons with faith, hope and peace. I hope your homes are filled to the brim with family and friends, love, laughter, and joy. I look forward to working collectively, cooperatively and with our true purpose in 2025.

> **High Performance Leadership** 12 - Week Course Provides best practices in leadership, organizational development and change management, negotiation and collaboration, effective business communication, and delivering value within high performance management.

**Enroll Yourself Or Your Team** 

Find out more at NACo.org/skills

8- Week Course An individualized exploration of meaning and impact as it applies to leadership in the workplace. Through self-assessments, interactive exercises, peer-group discussion, and self-reflection, participants learn to align motivation with decision-making skills to better assemble a unique sense of purpose and legacy. Email moderator@pdaleadership.com Find out more at NACo.org/skills

We have one mission and one purpose: To Make Leaders Better.
The Professional Development Academy is a mentorship-based leadership development platform that provides insights from leading public and private executives, top academics, and subject matter experts. Our team is committed to helping make existing leaders better and emerging leaders ready to address the most pressing issues of our day and enable them to reach their fullest potential.

California faces a profound and ongoing crisis of veteran homelessness. As the state with the largest veteran population, it also awarded funds still need to be utilized in ways that make services and housing accessible to our population.

Race and Ethnicity: Veterans identifying as Black or African American are disproportionately represented among the homeless veteran population at 31% of the total homeless veteran population, despite only representing 14% of all veterans in the state. Additionally, veterans identifying as multiracial constitute a higher percentage of the unsheltered veteran population compared to their sheltered counterparts. Gender and Family: Women veterans, often accompanied by children, face unique challenges that exacerbate housing in-Disability: Nearly 30% of veterans have a service-connected disability, further complicating their ability to secure stable em-

Screening for Veteran Status: Encouraging other county departments to identify and screen for veteran status, including county law enforcement and justice involved agencies (i.e. probation, DA, public defender). Creating Two-Way Referral Processes: Establishing efficient referral systems to ensure veterans relate to the right services promptly through integrated service efforts. Great examples of service integrated efforts are within the LA County

General Advocacy: Champion policy changes and initiatives that prioritize housing and overall support solutions for veter-A Call to Action

As your representative in Sacramento, we are diligently working to advance the interests of California veterans. The newly elected legislature was sworn in on December 2, 2024, and the legislative session has commenced. Several bills have been introduced, and two could significantly impact our veteran communi-

California and contribute through local taxes, it's disheartening that their issues often take a backseat in budget priorities. For Instance, SB 1124 (Menjivar, 2024), which aimed to address claims sharks, was held in appropriations due to a modest \$150,000 cost to the attorney general's office—yet we now see a proposed \$25 million fund for unrelated legal defenses.

January 24: Deadline to submit bill requests to the Office of Legislative Counsel.

**Education Consultants Update** 

It Still Takes A Village!

qualify for her death benefits should he predecease her.

Call to Action Your continued support and advocacy will be crucial as we move forward. Together, we can ensure that veteran issues remain at the forefront of legislative discussions and receive the attention and funding they deserve.

your assistance in filing the VA applications and constantly encouraging them to pursue their claims, many Veterans would give

A Veteran from Humboldt County had been denied a proper, earlier effective date (prior to the PACT Act) for his active bladder cancer as due to MOS-related toxic exposures. Despite submitting all proper supporting evidence (with the help of his CVSO) and continuously pursuing his claim since 2018, the AOJ kept denying it until the BVA ruled in his favor.

If your CVSO offices are like ours, your phones have not stopped ringing from worried Veterans and family members about the future of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans' benefits and compensation, and other VA programs. Predicting future events is not in our wheelhouse but like you, we are trying to reassure Veterans that all will be okay and do what we can to help them now, today. This reminded us of how much CACVSO members have helped CA Veterans and their families this year because, without

Those four extra years of retro-compensation helped provide some financial savings should he need advanced medical care in the years to come. A young Veteran from San Diego County who served stateside at March AFB from 2008-2012 was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL) in 2019 – and his wife was due with their first baby at the same time! His treating oncologist had provided a nexus statement, but it lacked medical references. We helped him secure a detailed nexus opinion which the Board relied on to grant his appeal for service connection. Thankfully, his NHL is in remission but now the Veteran's children will qualify for college tuition assistance. These are all excellent examples of how we all collaborate to help Veterans through the VA's claims and appeals process. No

Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Mac-

cabees who reclaimed the temple and re-lit

the Menorah. The miracle that occurred was

there was only enough oil to light a candle for

A light makes our way a little easier; it illuminates our path; it brings warmth when it's cold; it can draw us closer to one another.

VACo Societional Academic

ACo | PROFESSIONAL ACADEMY The NACo **Leadership Academy** Counties affect the lives of residents every day. When our staff are empowered as leaders, we deliver services more effectively. The NACO High Performance Leadership Academy is a resource that connects your staff with practical leadership training. HPLA uses an innovative, interactive online learning platform that combines real-time webinars, recorded sessions and small group discussions to deliver effective training without traveling away from the county – saving money and maximizing time.

The Academy Focuses On Five Essential Skills: